PITTA

Newsletter of Deccan Birders (formerly Birdwatchers' Society of Andhra Pradesh)
New Series Volume 19 Number 7 July 2022

FIELD TRIP: Sunday, 31st July 2022: Mokila. Meeting Point: NMDC, Masab Tank, 5.00AM; Telangana State Police Academy, 5.30AM. Trip Coordinator(s): Srikanth Bhamidipati (Mobile: 9738840070), Gokul Krishna Addanki (Mobile: 9945346585)

Mokila is a mix of different habitats and promises rich birding.

This will be a half-day trip. Carry water and breakfast/snacks, and rain gear if required. Strict Covid protocols will be followed, so please ensure you wear masks, carry a sanitiser and maintain social distancing. Members are requested to wear their Deccan Birders ID cards. Non-members are most welcome; however, they are requested to contribute Rs. 100/- per person to the Deccan Birders kitty.

Trip Report: Damagundam Reserve Forest, June 12, 2022

Sri Sai Harshita Prathi (Age: 10 years)

Indian Golden Oriole (Photo: Hemlata Paranjape)

We started our long drive to Damagundam Forest in Vikarabad at 05:30AM. I enjoyed the drive though it was far to reach, and entering the forest was so exciting!

Seniors of the Deccan Birders group welcomed us, explaining the dos and don'ts of birdwatching.

Being the first of its kind walk for me, it was an exciting experience to follow the big cameras and binoculars. We kids carried handbooks to list down the sighted birds.

Red-vented Bulbul (Photo: Hemlata Paranjape)

White-bellied Drongo (Photo: Hemlata Paranjape)

Indian White-eye (Photo: Hemlata Paranjape)

Coppersmith Barbet was the first one to greet us from the woods, followed by Red-vented and White-browed Bulbuls, White-bellied Drongo, Indian Robin, Indian White-eye, Tickell's Blue Flycatcher, Red-rumped Swallow, Eurasian Collared Dove, Common Hawk Cuckoo, Black-winged Kite, Red-wattled Lapwing, and Indian Pond Heron.

Tickell's Blue Flycatcher (Photo: Hemlata Paranjape)

Eurasian Collared Dove (Photo: Mohd Adnan Uddin)

Short-toed Snake Eagle (Photo: Mohd Adnan Uddin)

Sighting of a Short-toed Snake Eagle that flew across the sky being chased away by a Drongo was the highlight of the walk.

We kids collected some feathers and pebbles, and picked some natural ripe mangoes from the water stream which tasted real sweet.

A Dung Beetle rolling a dung ball across the path was interesting to watch, and someone explained how important it is to the eco-system.

Dung Roller Beetle (Photo: Kommireddi Pavan)

Learnings from the day were: a White-throated Fantail is a bird with a tail that opens like a fan (from Sathwik Anna) and Hemant uncle's hand-sketches of the Red-wattled Lapwing and Red-rumped Swallow.

Indian Grey Hornbill (Photo: Mohd Adnan Uddin)

Overall it was a great day surrounded by experienced birdwatchers who had good knowledge about birds and nature.

I'd love to be part of more of these kinds of birdwatching events in the future.

The full list of birds seen during the trip is given below:

Sl No	Species Name	Scientific Name	Sl No	Species Name	Scientific Name
1	Indian Peafowl	*Pavo cristatus*	25	Indian Golden Oriole	*Oriolus kundoo*
2	Rock Pigeon (Feral Pigeon)	*Columba livia*	26	Common Iora	*Aegithina tiphia*
3	Eurasian Collared Dove	*Streptopelia decaocto*	27	Black Drongo	*Dicrurus macrocercus*
4	Spotted Dove	*Streptopelia chinensis*	28	White-bellied Drongo	*Dicrurus caerulescens*
5	Southern Coucal	*Centropus sinensis parroti*	29	Rufous Treepie	*Dendrocitta vagabunda*
6	Blue-faced Malkoha	*Phaenicophaeus viridirostris*	30	House Crow	*Corvus splendens*
7	Asian Koel	*Eudynamys scolopaceus*	31	Grey-breasted Prinia	*Prinia hodgsonii*
8	Common Hawk Cuckoo	*Hierococcyx varius*	32	Ashy Prinia	*Prinia socialis*
9	Asian Palm Swift	*Cypsiurus balasiensis*	33	Red-rumped Swallow	*Cecropis daurica*
10	White-breasted Waterhen	*Amaurornis phoenicurus*	34	Red-vented Bulbul	*Pycnonotus cafer*
11	Red-wattled Lapwing	*Vanellus indicus*	35	White-browed Bulbul	*Pycnonotus luteolus*
12	Painted Stork	*Mycteria leucocephala*	36	Indian White-eye	*Zosterops palpebrosus*
13	Cattle Egret	*Bubulcus ibis*	37	Large Grey Babbler	*Argya malcolmi*
14	Indian Pond Heron	*Ardeola grayii*	38	Jungle Babbler	*Argya striata*
15	Short-toed Snake Eagle	*Circaetus gallicus*	39	Yellow-billed Babbler	*Argya affinis*
16	Shikra	*Accipiter badius*	40	Common Myna	*Acridotheres tristis*
17	Black Kite	*Milvus migrans*	41	Orange-headed Thrush	*Geokichla citrina*
18	Indian Grey Hornbill	*Ocyceros birostris*	42	Indian Robin	*Copsychus fulicatus*
19	White-throated Kingfisher	*Halcyon smyrnensis*	43	Oriental Magpie Robin	*Copsychus saularis*
20	Green Bee-eater	*Merops orientalis*	44	Pied Bushchat	*Saxicola caprata*
21	Coppersmith Barbet	*Psilopogon haemacephalus*	45	Purple-rumped Sunbird	*Leptocoma zeylonica*
22	Rose-ringed Parakeet	*Psittacula krameri*	46	Indian Silverbill	*Euodice malabarica*
23	Plum-headed Parakeet	*Psittacula cyanocephala*	47	Scaly-breasted Munia	*Lonchura punctulata*
24	Black-headed Cuckooshrike	*Lalage melanoptera*	48	House Sparrow	*Passer domesticus*

Some other photos taken during the trip:

Brahminy Starling (Photo: Hemlata Paranjape)

Orange-headed Thrush (Photo: Mohd Adnan Uddin)

Cinereous Tit (Photo: Hemlata Paranjape)

Jungle Babbler (Photo: Mohd Adnan Uddin)

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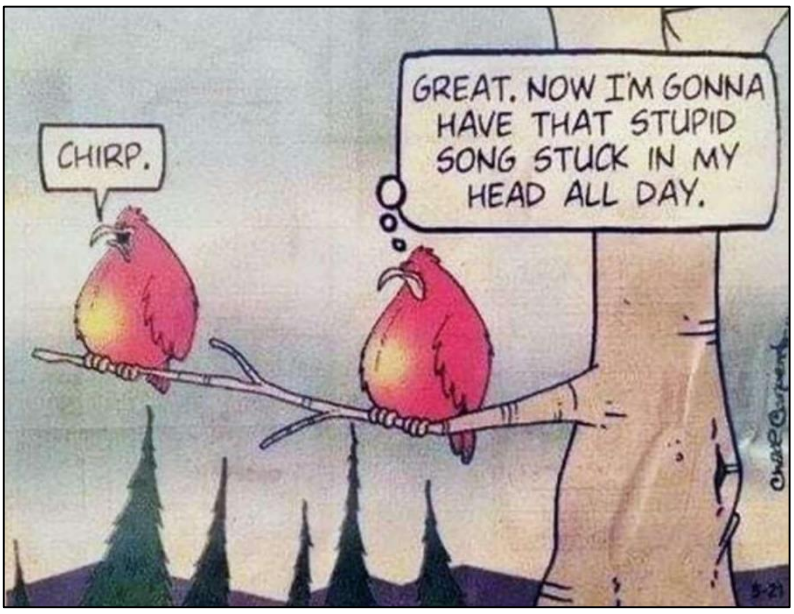
Bird Humour

Umesh Mani



(From Instagram, November 16, 2021)

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Bird of the Month

Text and Photos: Umesh Mani

Red-necked Falcon (*Falco chicquera*)

Red-necked Falcon (Gujarat, December 29, 2021)

Order: Falconiformes
Family: Falconidae
Genus: *Falco*
Species: *F. chicquera*
Size: 31-36 cm

Description & distribution: A mid-sized bird of prey, the Red-necked Falcon is known to have two separate populations, one in Africa and the other in India. The nominate, *Falco chicquera chicquera*, is the Indian subspecies, and has a distinctive rufous crown, nape and narrow moustachial stripe, bluish-grey wings and upperparts with fine dark barring, yellow legs, ceres and eye-ring, a clear throat, and white underparts with light, narrow blackish or brownish barring. At rest, the wingtips do not reach the tip of the tail, which is white-tipped and has narrow black bars with a broad black subterminal band. The bill is yellow with a black tip. The African subspecies, *F. c. ruficollis*, is sometimes considered a full species (*Falco ruficollis*) and is quite similar except that it has pale grey wings and upperparts, the face is white with black chinstraps passing through the eyes, and a rufous foreneck band that is not present in the Indian subspecies. The sexes are alike, with the female being a little bigger.The juvenile is similar but darker, with fine streaking on head and fine rufous fringes to upperparts and underparts.

It is found mainly in the drier parts of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

Habitat & behaviour: The Red-necked Falcon, also called Red-headed Falcon or Red-headed Merlin, prefers open plains and scrub country around villages and cultivated areas. Its flight is strong and fast, and the pair often hunts cooperatively, usually at dawn and dusk, with one heading off the prey while the other attacks and strikes it down. Its diet consists mainly of small birds, rodents (e.g. rats, mice, squirrels), lizards and insects, though it may also occasionally take bats. Its usual call is a high-pitched *ki-ki-ki-ki-ki*, but it may also utter a rasping *yak, yak, yak* or a screaming *tiririri, tiriririeee*.

Nesting: The Red-necked Falcon breeds mainly from January to May. The nest is a well-made cup or platform of twigs lined with grass and roots, built up in a tree or on top of a building, but it also often uses old twig nests of other birds. The usual clutch consists of 3-4 eggs, pale reddish-white, thickly speckled with reddish brown. It is bold and aggressive during nesting season, and may attack and chase away even bigger birds that may wander near the tree where it is nesting.

Local name: The Red-necked Falcon is known as *'Turimti'* or *'Turumtari'* (for the female) in Hindi and Gujarati, and *'Chatwa'* (for the male) in Sindhi and Gujarati; *'Jellaganta', 'Jelgadda'* or *'Jale gadda'* in Telugu; and *'Laal siri turmati'* in Punjabi.

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